



# HEALTH CARE

## POLLUTION PREVENTION SELF-AUDIT CHECKLIST

### *Small Quantity Medical Waste Generators*



*Pollution Prevention Assistance for San Diego County*

- ❑ **Environmentally Preferable Purchasing:** Continually ask vendors to provide environmentally preferable, less toxic and recycled-content products with less packaging. Consider purchasing reusable vs. disposable products. Obtain references from vendors for the use of safer alternative products. Remember, “less toxic” or “safer alternative” does not always mean non-hazardous and when used, these may still need to be managed as hazardous waste.
- ❑ **Toxics Use Reduction:**
  - ❖ **Reduce or eliminate Mercury in your facility:** Recycle mercury amalgam as scrap metal. Inventory all mercury containing equipment and chemicals and begin to replace with mercury-free alternatives; dispose/recycle old mercury containing devices as hazardous waste or universal waste. Train employees on Mercury Spill Procedures. Offer or recommend mercury-free thermometers to patients. Host a mercury thermometer exchange.
  - ❖ **Reduce or eliminate the use of Glutaraldehyde and Formaldehyde:** Re-evaluate your need for these chemicals. Train employees on their proper use to minimize waste, spills and exposure. Consider other available less toxic alternatives (*check equipment and instrument compatibility*). Minimize use of formalin by purchasing the smallest container needed. Formalin, xylene, and alcohol can be distilled and recycled.
- ❑ **Waste Reduction:**
  - ❖ **Fine-tune Inventory Controls:** Careful tracking of expiration dates. Having a “first in first out” policy and minimizing vendor samples can reduce the need to dispose of expired pharmaceuticals and other out-dated chemical products.
  - ❖ **Encourage Red Bag Segregation:** Train staff to properly segregate red-bag waste from solid waste. This will not only reduce disposal costs but also will better protect workers and prevent environmental contamination.
  - ❖ **Re-use existing Computer Monitors when upgrading hard drives:** Computer monitors and TVs contain lead and other hazardous constituents. Donate working computer equipment and recycle your electronic waste and used batteries as universal waste.
  - ❖ **Take responsibility for Home-generated Sharps:** Provide a take back service for patients. Offer an approved sharps container. Include in the prescription a sharps container or recommend a mail back service. Instruct patients on proper home-generated sharps disposal.
- ❑ **Natural Resource Conservation:**
  - ❖ **Assure proper liquid waste disposal to Sewer:** It is illegal to dispose of hazardous waste to the sewer. X-ray fixer must be treated prior to sewer discharge or hauled off-site for recycling. Contact your local sewer agency for additional discharge requirements and keep pollutants out of our ocean.
  - ❖ **Request an Energy and Water Audit:** Utilities usually provide this service free of charge and may also offer rebate incentives
  - ❖ **Recycle office waste:** Aluminum, glass, paper, plastic, cardboard, toner cartridges and blue wrap are all recyclable.
- ❑ **Share your Pollution Prevention Successes:** Other health care facilities throughout your professional association can really benefit from your experience. Encourage employees to promote pollution prevention at home to further protect the health of our community.



### **NEED MORE INFORMATION?**

#### **ON THE WEB:**

Environmentally preferable, less toxic product listings:

[www.sustainablehospitals.org](http://www.sustainablehospitals.org)

Guide to Mercury Elimination:

[www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

Alternative liquid sterilants; Self-assessment Guide; Mercury Spill Procedures:

[www.h2e-online.org](http://www.h2e-online.org)

“Pollution prevention for selected hospital waste streams”:

<http://www.epa.gov/pbt>

Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxics:

[www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org)

Alternative Janitorial products:

[www.westp2net.org](http://www.westp2net.org)

Solid Waste Fact Sheet-Hospitals:

[www.ciwmb.ca.gov/bizwaste](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/bizwaste)

Best Practices and Exposure Control Plan – Bloodborne Pathogens:

<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh>

*Publications*

#### **OR CALL:**

San Diego County HMD:  
Toll free (800) 253-9933  
or (619) 338-2231

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